



VIRGIL SMITH

4TH DISTRICT

P.O. BOX 30036

LANSING, MI 48909-7536

TOLL-FREE: (866) 348-6304

FAX: (517) 373-5227

senvsmith@senate.michigan.gov

**THE SENATE
STATE OF MICHIGAN**

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

SENATORS GO AFTER BLIGHT VIOLATORS

Citing blight as one of the major hurdles which creates an obstacle to living and investing in Detroit, State Senator Virgil Smith (D-Detroit) unveiled a package of bills that will add teeth to the enforcement of blight violations, and give Michigan's cities more tools to go after blight violations.

"I'm sick and tired of the blight in my city, and after researching the problem I realized that we need to give Detroit, and other cities throughout Michigan the ability to go after bad actors," Virgil Smith said. "If you own property, you need to be responsible and clean it up, board it up, or tear it down."

The five bills have bipartisan support, with Senators Smith, Rick Jones (R-Grand Ledge), Tonya Schuitmaker (R-Lawton), Tupac Hunter (D-Detroit), and Bert Johnson (D-Highland Park) each sponsoring a bill. The bills are SB 35-39 and will do the following:

- Clarify that failure to comply with a DAH judgment can be classified as a misdemeanor and prosecuted at district court;
- Save cities money by streamlining the lien process to ensure payment of judgments against blight violators;
- Attempt to streamline the garnishment procedure on owners who do not pay the fines following their appeal;
- Prohibit cities from issuing zoning approval to anyone with a blight violation; and
- Prohibit cities from issuing building permits to anyone with a blight violation.

The bills passed the Michigan Senate and are waiting for a vote by the House Local Government Committee.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

SCRAP METAL THEFT

The theft of scrap metal contributes directly to the problem of blight in our city. The theft of scrap metal is not just an urban issue. It affects our rural and suburban communities as well. In recent years, thefts of various types of metal have been on the increase both in Michigan and nationwide. This trend involves the theft of copper tubing from construction sites, or copper wiring from telephone or utility lines. In addition to construction sites and utility facilities, metal products are stolen from schools, churches, cemeteries, parks, farms, automobiles, and both abandoned and occupied houses. The situation has been fueled by a surge in scrap metal prices over the last four years and the increased worldwide demand for recycled metal. As metal prices continue to rise, the theft of more types of metal also is on the rise. Increasingly, metals such as bronze, zinc, nickel, and aluminum are targeted by thieves for resale as scrap.

Equipping law enforcement with the tools they need to effectively combat the crime of scrap metal theft, while continuing to enforce and strengthen current transacting laws for scrap metal recyclers is the approach I have been supporting.

I have been working on a three bill package that will serve as another tool for local municipalities to help fight the theft of scrap metal. Below is a description of each bill and what it does to combat scrap metal theft:

- Senate Bill 468 would require the registration of scrap metal sellers.
 - It requires that a person wanting to sell or transport nonferrous scrap metal have a valid permit issued by their local sheriff's office.
 - Nonferrous metals, including copper, may be purchased by a metal recycler if certain conditions are met.
 - If a scrap dealer buys or sells stolen scrap metal their license will be revoked for one year and they are guilty of a 5 year felony and a fine of not more than \$5,000.
- Senate Bill 469 requires scrap metal dealers to verify the purchase permit of a seller from the local sheriff's office as required by SB 468.
- Senate Bill 470 creates the Scrap Metal Offenders Registry.
 - Creates The Scrap Metal Offenders Registration Fund.
 - Requires regulatory fee of \$1 collected for each metal transaction.
 - Requires 50% of regulatory fee collected to be paid to Scrap Metal Offender Registration Fund and 50% to local law enforcement to create registry and fight scrap theft crimes.

On Thursday, October 17 the Michigan Senate Economic Development Committee had a hearing in Southwest Detroit on this topic. We heard testimony from citizens, business, and law enforcement on how scrap metal theft creates dangerous structures, destabilizes neighborhoods, and presents special problems to the housing market, not only in urban areas, but all over our state. It is my goal with this legislation to begin the conversation between all parties on how we can better educate, fund, and enforce laws that combat the bad actors, and stop scrap metal theft.